Support Key Provisions Contained In the Energy Policy Modernization Act (S. 2012) and Encourage Their Passage and Implementation including sections 4101, 1002, 1003, 1004, 1006, 1007 and 1008.

January 8, 2016

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Senate Majority Leader
317 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Harry Reid
Senate Minority Leader
522 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Majority Leader McConnell and Minority Leader Reid:

The High Performance Building Coalition is comprised of more than 200 trade associations, manufacturers, and other private sector organizations with the sole focus on promoting policies that advance high performance buildings. We applaud the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources for their work on moving forward comprehensive energy legislation, and we urge you to pass key provisions contained in the Energy Policy Modernization Act of 2015 (S. 2012 or EPMA). These provisions are common sense and practical solutions to the energy challenges we face as a country.

Section 4101: Nexus of energy and water for sustainability

Energy and water systems are interdependent. Unfortunately, we can no longer assume that the future will be like the past in terms of climate, technology, and the evolving decision landscape. A recent report released by the U.S. Department of Energy found that water scarcity, variability, and uncertainty are becoming more prominent, leading to vulnerabilities in the U.S. energy system. Section 4101 of the EPMA contains the Nexus of Energy and Water Sustainability Act (News Act). The News Act would coordinate federal energy-water nexus programs to minimize duplication and facilitate collaboration among stakeholders. It directs the Secretary of Energy and the Secretary of the Interior to establish a committee to coordinate the activities of all Federal departments and agencies on energy-water nexus issues. It requires identification of all relevant energy-water nexus activities, coordination on effective research and development activities, collaboration to disseminate data that enables better practices, and exploration of public-private partnerships. The News Act is a vital and necessary step to coordinating and addressing nexus challenges and opportunities.

Sections 1002, 1003, 1004 and 1006: Energy and water efficiency in multifamily residential units, schools, nonprofit and Federal buildings.
Last year, 41% of total U.S. energy consumption was consumed in residential and commercial buildings. The High Performance Building Coalition unequivocally supports and applauds the inclusion of Sections 1002, 1003, 1004 and 1006 which save taxpayer dollars by creating a pathways for public housing, schools and government buildings to make energy and water efficient upgrades. Several of these provisions support the use of energy savings performance contracts. Under this financing mechanism, private sector service companies finance and install new energy and water efficient equipment at minimal or no upfront cost to the Federal government. Federal agencies repay this investment over time with funds saved on utility costs. The private sector contractors measure, verify and guarantee these energy savings. Allowing for these performance-based agreements employs a proven, market driven approach to realizing energy and water efficiency in publicly owned buildings.

Sections 1007 and 1008: Creating a skilled workforce

In 2012, 53 percent of skilled-trade workers in the U.S. were 45 years and older and 18.6 percent were between the ages of 55 and 64. The heavy proportion of older skilled-trade workers puts into focus the pending retirement for baby boomers and oft-cited gap between the skills that employers need and available workers possess. We applaud the inclusion of Section 1007 and 1008 which are necessary to building a competitive, skilled workforce. These sections allow agencies to work with institutions of higher learning to establish building training and assessment centers and it directs the Secretary of Energy to provide grants to eligible entities to cover a portion of the cost of careers skills training programs that lead to students receiving an industry-related certification for the installation of energy efficient building technologies. This is an important step to helping ensure that America has the skilled workforce that our more advanced buildings and industry require.

Section 2304: Hybrid micro-grid systems for isolated communities

We also support your call for the establishment of a program to promote the development hybrid micro-grid systems for isolated communities and to increase the resilience of critical infrastructure. Additional resources allocated in this area will greatly enhance the foundational efforts of DOE, DOD and NSF that are underway and be extremely beneficial in significantly improving the resiliency of the utility grid. Moving forward, you may also want to consider broadening the definition of a “micro-grid” system to include direct current (DC) electrical systems. This recommendation is made based on the following: hybrid systems that include renewables/battery storage have DC as both output and input; significant energy savings can be realized in an all DC environment that are not available in an AC/DC world; DC micro-grids are cheaper to construct, use fewer components, and are easier to maintain.

We urge you to support the passage of these key provisions that are imperative to modernizing how we use energy in buildings and that ensure the efficient, sustainable of use of our country’s energy and water resources. Thank you for your consideration of our request and we stand ready to work with you and your staff on these and related matters.
Sincerely,

The High Performance Building Congressional Caucus Coalition  
www.HPBCCC.org

American Society of Interior Designers  
Armstrong Filtration  
Association of Energy Engineers  
Green Building Initiative  
Illuminating Engineering Society  
International Association of Plumbing and Mechanical Officials  
International Code Council  
National Roofing Contractors Association  
Passive House Institute United States  
Sheet Metal and Air Conditioning Contractors National Association